



# Conference of Major Superiors of Men

8808 Cameron St. - Silver Spring, MD 20910 - 301.588.4030 - [www.cmsm.org](http://www.cmsm.org)

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Media Release

Media Contact: Eli McCarthy  
301-588-4030

## ***Catholic Religious Across the Americas Escalate Migrant Accompaniment***

*Silver Spring MD:* We are moved by the anxiety and suffering of the Dreamers to escalate our accompaniment and our resistance to injustice, especially as the March 5<sup>th</sup> deadline approaches. On Friday Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>, Catholic leaders from the religious conferences of the U.S. (Conference of Superiors of Men and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious), Mexico, Caribbean and Latin American Confederation of Religious, and Canada crossed borders to meet and journeyed to the border wall at Sasabe, AZ. We offered a prayer service for Dreamers as well as all our migrant sisters and brothers. We sensed the deep pain of their struggles and the desire in us for our country to build bridges, not walls between communities and countries. We heard from a Samaritan leader in Tucson about how immigrants continue to die in the desert and more wall means more deaths.

Religious leaders participating in the encounter were Fr. Brian Terry, SA, Fr. Mark Padrez, OP, Fr. Roberto Salvidar-Ureno, MSpS, and Fr. John Pavlik, OFM Cap from the U.S. Conference of Superiors of Men, Sr. Teresa Maya, CCVI, Sr. Sharlet Ann Wagner, and Sr. Carole Shinnick, SSND, from the U.S. Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Sr. Clara Alcantara Torres, ME and Br. Francisco Flores, FSC from the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious in Mexico (CIRM), Sr. Mercedes Leticia Casas Sanchez, FSpS from the Caribbean and Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR), along with Br. Louis Cinq-Mars, OFM Cap and Sr. Michelle Payette, MIC from the Canadian Religious Conference.

Sr. Clara Alcantara, ME: "Thank you for allowing us to participate in this experience of solidarity and presence with the reality of migration and dreamers. In religious life we have to be where there are no signs of the kingdom and actions such as today are steps to create chains of encounter and prayer."

Sr. Teresa Maya, CCVI: "Standing on the US-Mexico Border contemplating the miles of desert where thousands of migrants have died in an effort to get to a better life I prayed for our Church. I prayed because I realized what losing DACA means. We could fail the young men and women who deserve the basic human rights of work, education, and legal personality. But I prayed for all Christians everywhere to stand up and refuse to fail our fellow human beings by the complicity of silence. This would be the greater moral failure, to remain silent when human dignity is being refused."

Sr. Michelle Payette, MIC: "At the foot of this wall, in the desert, we prayed in solidarity with Dreamers and migrants. The text of Leviticus 19: 33-34 guided our prayer: If a foreigner resides

with you in your land, you will not mistreat them. The foreigner who resides with you will be for you like your compatriot and you will love them as yourself, for you have been strangers in the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.”

Fr. John Pavlik, OFM Cap: “Praying at the border of Mexico and the United States, with the steel and concrete wall running far onto the horizon, and standing shoulder to shoulder with women and men religious from Mexico, Canada, and the United States, allowed us to touch a periphery, a narrow space but opening to wide, empty spaces where real persons have perished in braving harsh, unforgiving landscape in order to escape harsh and deadly social conditions. How many of the citizens of the three countries represented at the wall in Sasabe came to another land for similar reasons? As women and men of the Gospel, we could not close our ears to the cry of the downtrodden nor could we close our eyes to persons hurting; let not our country want to become cruel again by evicting those who endured great pain to escape worst. We are much better than this self-protective impulse.”

Together, we renew our commitment to act in concrete, courageous solidarity with Dreamers and all our migrant sisters and brothers across the Americas. This Tuesday Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. we will be participating in the [Catholic Day of Action with Dreamers](#). We strongly encourage our fellow Catholics to participate in this day and for our Catholic congressional representatives to take a leadership role in passing a clean Dream Act.

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The **Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)** supports and offers resources for U.S. leaders of Catholic men's religious institutes. CMSM promotes dialogue and collaboration on issues of religious life as well as peace and justice issues with major groups in church and society. There are more than 17,000 religious priests and brothers in the United States.

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